

MORTON (THOS. S.K.)

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THE FOOT), WITH AN ACCOUNT OF SIX CASES  
CURED BY OPERATION.

BY

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## METATARSALGIA (MORTON'S PAINFUL AFFECTION OF THE FOOT), WITH AN ACCOUNT OF SIX CASES CURED BY OPERATION.

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THE affection that has come to be best known as "Morton's Painful Affection of the Foot," or "Morton's Toe," was first described and a method of certain cure presented by Dr. Thomas G. Morton, of Philadelphia, in 1876, under title of "A Peculiar Painful Affection of the Fourth Metatarso-phalangeal Articulation."<sup>1</sup> In subsequent publications<sup>2</sup> he has confirmed his views relative to cause and treatment, and reported large numbers of cases.

The disease under consideration may be described as a painful affection of the plantar digital nerves, directly caused by pressure upon or pinching of them by certain portions of the metatarso-phalangeal articulations—especially the fourth.

The reason for the fourth toe being the almost invariable seat of origin of the train of painful and neurotic symptoms to be described is ascribed to anatomical causes by Morton in the following language:

"The occurrence of neuralgia may be understood by a reference to the anatomy of the parts. The metatarso-phalangeal joints of the first, second, and third toes are found on almost a direct line with each other, while the head of the fourth metatarsal is from one-eighth to one-fourth of an inch behind the head of the third, and the head of the fifth is from three-eighths to half an inch behind the head of the fourth; the joint of the third, therefore, is slightly in advance of the joint of the fourth, and the joint of the fifth is considerably behind the joint of the fourth.

"The fifth metatarsal joint is so much posterior to the fourth that the base of first phalanx of the little toe is brought on a

<sup>1</sup> American Journal Medical Sciences, January, 1876.

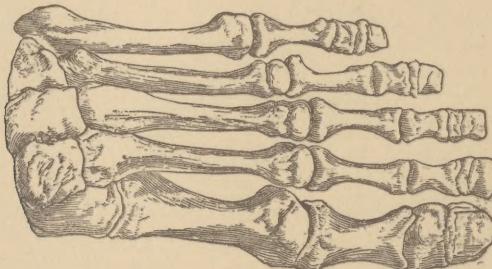
<sup>2</sup> Surgery in the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1880, p. 157. Philadelphia Medical Times, October 2, 1886.



line with the head and neck of the fourth metatarsal, the head of the fifth metatarsal being opposed to the neck of the fourth. (See illustration.)

"On account of the character of the peculiar tarsal articulation, there is very slight lateral motion in the first three metatarsal bones. The fourth has greater mobility, the fifth still more than the fourth, and in this respect it resembles the fifth metacarpal. Lateral pressure brings the head of the fifth metatarsal and the phalanx of the little toe into direct contact with the head and neck of the fourth metatarsal, and to some extent the extremity of the fifth metatarsal rolls above and under the fourth metatarsal.

"The mechanism of the affection now becomes apparent when we consider the nerve-supply of the parts. The branches of the external plantar nerve are fully distributed to the little toe



and to the outer side of the fourth; there are also numerous branches of this nerve deeply lodged in between these toes, and they are liable not only to be unduly compressed, but pinched by a sudden twist of the anterior part of the foot. Any foot-movement which may suddenly displace the toes, when confined in a shoe, may induce an attack of this neuralgia. In some cases no abnormality or other specific cause for the disease has been detected."

This explanation undoubtedly will account for the great majority of cases, and perhaps all could be ascribed to pinching of the nerves between the metacarpo-phalangeal articulation. Yet there have been reported a few cases where the transverse metatarsal ligament has appeared to be lax or ruptured, thus permitting the metatarsal heads to descend upon the nerves. Auguste Poulosson, of Lyons, in 1889,<sup>1</sup> after reporting a typical case, says that "the cause of the affection is evidently a certain laxity of the transverse metatarsal ligament, which permits partial infraction of the arch formed by the heads of the five metatarsal

<sup>1</sup> Lancet, March 2, 1889, p. 346.

bones, one of the middle ones, probably the third, becoming dislocated downward and compressing the nerves running along each side of it against the heads of the neighboring bones."

L. G. Guthrie,<sup>1</sup> in writing of metatarsal neuralgia, states his belief that "under the influence of prolonged standing or walking in tight boots, the ligaments of one or more joints, metatarso-phalangeal or phalangeal only, become strained, slight subluxation takes place, the nerves are stretched and pressed upon by the partially dislocated bones, and the characteristic pain is produced."

In reference to the supposed dislocations above mentioned, Morton says :

"The dislocation referred to is not a true dislocation, but is simply a twist of the toe, and a violent spasmodic condition of the muscles of the toe incident to the intense pain, simulating a dislocation, which, when the toe is compressed laterally and in its rolling between the third and fifth suddenly, presses upon and pinches the underlying plantar-nerve branch."

Edward F. Grün,<sup>2</sup> himself a sufferer from the affection, believes that the pain results from descent of the tarsal arch, which is accompanied by lengthening of the foot and spreading to the outer side, so that "where the weight comes on the member the foot spreads inordinately; the boot is not constructed to allow for so much spreading, and a frightful cramping pain is the result, causing the patient to remove the boot without regard to place or circumstances—often the most inconvenient."

E. H. Bradford<sup>3</sup> states that the results of treatment in these cases, as well as the symptoms and localization of the point of severest pain, make him agree with Morton, in believing the affection to be originated by pinching of the metatarsal nerve, rather than to flattening of the tarsal arch, as suggested by Poulossen. In none of his thirteen cases was any degree of flat-foot present.

In a large number of cases seen by me, in addition to those herein reported, it has not been possible to demonstrate any laxity of the metatarsal ligaments, and, while in a few the pain was referred to other of the metatarso-phalangeal joints than the fourth, yet upon careful manipulation it was always found that the pain was reflected from the fourth to the other joints. It must be conceded, of course, that laxity or rupture of the transverse ligament would predispose to injury of the nerves at

<sup>1</sup> "On a Form of Painful Toe," Lancet, 1892, vol. i. p. 628.

<sup>2</sup> Lancet, April 6, 1889, p. 707.

<sup>3</sup> "Metatarsal Neuralgia, or Morton's Affection of the Foot." Boston Med. and Surg. Journal, 1891, vol. ii. p. 52.

the fourth joint by permitting greater motion of the overlapping bony points in that situation. However, while the exact etiology of the affection is of great scientific interest, clinically it is of small account, as excision of the fourth metatarso-phalangeal articulation, as originally proposed by Morton, or amputation of the fourth toe, including the corresponding metatarsal head, invariably has secured an absolute and permanent cure. No dissections of the diseased regions have yet been possible, nor have the nerves been in any case excised so that microscopical examination could be made. I have carefully examined a number of the joints that have been removed for the cure of the affection, and have in no instance been able to prove any anomaly or disease.

Metatarsalgia is, in its lesser degrees, a very common disease. Almost every one has suffered more or less, at times, from neuralgic twinges radiating from the joint in question. These mild cases occasionally develop into the more severe forms. In them occasional attacks of pain are often followed by periods of complete immunity.

Morton made extended inquiries among retail shoe dealers and found "that this peculiar condition had not only been frequently recognized by them, but that it is also considered to be quite common. Almost every intelligent shoe retailer has seen a number of persons to whom this disease has been a source of frequent suffering, and who believe their malady to be beyond relief by medical art; indeed, it would seem that in some of the most severe of the cases it has been found impossible to obtain the serious consideration of their condition by their medical attendants."

So recently as 1891 Bradford<sup>1</sup> has written:

"It is somewhat singular that an affection that is not infrequent in these days of thorough investigation of all ailments, should have attracted but little attention, either in the researches of surgeons or of neurologists. The cases are so usually classed among the ill-defined hysterical or nervous affections, and not thoroughly investigated; or they are deemed to be gouty, as, in the minds of many practitioners, are frequently all affections of the toes."

The disease has not been observed before adolescence. Women are certainly more predisposed than are men, and its occurrence in the former sex I should judge to be almost twice as frequent as in the latter. One foot is most usually involved, especially in those cases apparently taking origin from an injury. But very frequently one foot is affected to an almost unbearable

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

degree, while its fellow is but slightly involved. Neither right nor left foot appears to be most liable to involvement unless one or the other is constantly subjected to a motion, as in running certain sewing machines, looms, lathes, etc., while the other is not employed. In this case, as in one of my own, the pain developed in the foot so employed. When both feet become simultaneously affected the cause will often be found in ill-fitting or tight shoes. Middle life is the period at which the disease is most apt to develop or to become severe. The aged are by no means exempt, although in them more purely gouty or neuralgic forms are prone to occur, and persons at any age, so predisposed, appear to be much more liable to the affection—idiopathic or traumatic—than are others.

The influence of heredity is very marked. I know of several families in which a number of persons, mainly confined to the female sex, are similarly affected. It is interesting to note that in these instances some cases have arisen from twists or sprains of the foot, and others apparently idiopathically.

The exciting or immediate cause of metatarsalgia is usually excessive or unusual exercise of the feet while confined in new, tight, or ill-fitting shoes, as in walking over rough surfaces (mountain-climbing), dancing, playing lawn tennis, etc., or in changing from a firm-soled shoe to one that permits great motion of the metatarsal arch. When the heads of the metatarsal bones are rigidly held in contact by a tight shoe it is reasonable to believe that a very slight twist or wrench of the foot would bring great pressure to bear upon the sensitive branches of the digital nerves distributed upon and about them, and, particularly in those predisposed thereto, bring about a neuralgic and even neuritic condition. This once set up, and the nerves having become sensitive, swollen, or inflamed, ever so slight repetitions of the pressure or bruising are capable of originating the most agonizing suffering. Later, continuous or frequently recurring attacks of this pain, or actual ascent of neuritis, commence reflex contractions and other neurotic complications, perhaps of the gravest type, as witness in Case I. of my series, where the patient had become bed-ridden and severely neurasthenic.

So far as relates to symptomatology, I shall depend upon quoting a few more or less typical cases from the literature of the subject and upon the histories of my own operative cases, but may here mention that I regard the *imperative necessity of removing the shoe*, regardless of surroundings, when a paroxysm comes on, as a pathognomonic symptom of the disease. It may also be said that no evidence of the disease can usually be felt or seen, except that the parts are often of a bluish tint and cold, from venous stasis, and have a tendency to profuse perspiration.

CASE I.—Miss I. F. S., aged thirty-one years, teacher, was brought to me by her physician, Dr. George L. Romine, of Lambertville, N. J., in June, 1892.

The following history was elicited: Family history excellent; she had always enjoyed the best of health and strength until the present trouble commenced. In July, 1890, she played lawn tennis for the greater portion of a day, coming down heavily on the balls of the feet many times, after which she walked a short distance to her home, and felt greatly fatigued. After resting two hours she attempted to walk, and experienced a "queer sensation" along the outside of the left foot, a feeling "as if something had given way about half-way between the toes and heel."

"In the evening I walked down town, but could scarcely return, for it was so hard to make my foot go. I felt as if retarded in some mysterious way. By the time I reached home a line of pain extended from the place above mentioned all the way to my hip. Thinking I had sprained my foot, I applied the usual remedies. The next morning my foot felt rested, but during a short walk on the street the pain in my foot and limb returned.

"By this time the foot began to swell, particularly along the outside, and in a few days had a reddish appearance. After a night's rest the swelling disappeared, and I was able to use my foot, with intervals of rest, in ordinary walking about the house. Each day it gave out after less use, so at the end of five days I called in our family physician, Dr. Romine, of Lambertville."

It was presumed that a ligament or tendon had been ruptured, and fixation by bandages resorted to. On August 7 these dressings were removed.

"The foot and limb were helpless, and the whole side of the foot felt so indescribably bad that it made me faint. A starched dressing was then put on the foot and limb to the knee. For four or five days following I held my foot on a chair, but after that, during part of the day, on a pillow on the floor. Toward evening I had almost unbearable tingling in the foot, but this passed away on retiring. I never could rest my foot on the outside from the time of the accident without having that unbearable feeling in the foot, and at times the line of pain in the limb.

"At the end of four weeks the Doctor told me to stand with my feet even. Never shall I forget what I suffered that day. The limb had shortened so that the heel was about two inches from the floor, and in trying to stretch it down the bottom of the foot pained and tingled dreadfully. I was completely exhausted and deathly sick.

"Crutches were then ordered, and I commenced my hard work of learning to walk.

"My foot was so bad on the side, and a line of dreadful pain extended from about two inches from the fourth toe along the side of the foot and to the knee. After a time the pain in the limb seemed better, but the whole side of the foot felt unspeakably bad. The uncomfortable sensation did not seem confined to any particular place on the side, as it did at first.

"The 1st of October the physician advised my going to school in order to overcome my nervousness, and take my mind from the foot. I wore a worsted slipper.

"The last of October the Doctor commenced the use of a battery every night—the interrupted current being used. The sponge was applied under and over the toes five minutes, five on each side of the heel, and five under the knee. The toes twitched a great deal, and I always dreaded when the sponge neared the fourth and fifth toes, for I felt the sting and jerk along the injured side, and it made me sick. I could bear only a light pressure there. When applied under the knee I felt the line of pain down the outside of the limb, and often the toes would jump. When the current passed down the inside of the limb it felt agreeable.

"My foot always felt badly on removing the shoe at night, and the limb above was very much swollen and glossy in appearance.

"The last of July, 1891, I took a short walk, without support, along the piazza. That night my foot pained up to the knee, and I was unable to touch it to the floor for more than a week. I was careful to take only a few steps at a time after that. At the end of a year this was all I could do.

"If I rubbed the foot, or put it down otherwise than just flat when I stepped, I was unable to use it afterward.

"I used crutches all the time at school, so as not to overtire my foot again; but, in spite of all my care, I had that dreadful feeling on the side, and many days the line of pain up the limb.

"Often the foot had fits of shaking, which I could not control."

She continued thus helpless, using crutches for locomotion, and became thoroughly neurasthenic, until June, 1892, when I saw her in consultation with Dr. Romine. We agreed that the diagnosis was clearly the peculiar painful affection of the fourth metatarso-phalangeal articulation, and that the other symptoms were probably but those of reflex neuroses; also that excision of the joint offered the only means of relief. However, it was determined first to try the effect of an ointment composed of ichthylol and lanolin, together with fly blisters in the course of

the affected nerves. These measures proving of no avail, in July I removed the joint. At the same time it was thought best to divide the tendo Achillis, as the heel had become much drawn up by contraction of the calf muscles, and did not relax even under anaesthesia.

From the moment of operation she never again experienced the old pain, and immediately began to gain flesh and strength under massage, hyper-nutrition, and rest in bed for three weeks. At the expiration of this period she was walking about unaided, and soon was as well and strong as ever. Union by first intention was secured, no weakness of the calf resulted, and the amount of retraction of the toe is about one-quarter of an inch. She now wears an ordinary shoe, and can make almost any exertion without discomfort.

CASE II.—N. C., aged thirty-two years, female, servant, native of Ireland. Family history negative. Had always enjoyed good health until October, 1889, when she tripped in going down stairs, and brought her left foot down violently in saving herself. Instantly she experienced an intense cutting pain in the region of the base of the fourth toe. The dorsum of the foot became black and blue, while the whole limb was affected with a dull burning pain. For several days she wore a slipper; then the discoloration gradually disappeared and pain became more endurable. But she had to cut every shoe that was worn, to prevent pressure upon the painful area. This painful sensation gradually extended from the original location up the front of the tibia, and became very severe in that situation. This misled a prominent surgeon to diagnose periostitis of the tibia, and cut down upon and scrape the bone. She remained in the hospital eight weeks, and was discharged unimproved. In February, 1891, another hospital surgeon cut down upon and chiseled away a portion of the tibia. Again no improvement followed.

Early in 1892 the patient entered the Polyclinic Hospital, willing to submit to anything to obtain relief. At this time she was almost helpless, exceedingly neurasthenic, and had lost much flesh. The scars of the previous operations were very evident. The entire leg was blue and cold and somewhat atrophied, but beyond this nothing was evident except that the fourth metatarso-phalangeal joint and its surroundings were exquisitely sensitive to motion or pressure. From this point the pain was reflected up through the entire sciatic distribution. She was put to bed, and upon a milk diet for four weeks, while local counter-irritants and absorbents were applied, all to but little effect; the old pains and her general nervous condition persisted. I then excised the affected joint, and was amazed at

her rapid progress to subsequent cure. Primary union was secured, and in three weeks she was walking about and entirely free from pain. Since then she has entirely recovered her former health and strength.

CASE III.—Mrs. E., aged thirty-five years, well-to-do farmer's wife, seen in consultation with Dr. George L. Romine. Family history good. She is of a neurotic temperament, and faints easily. During last ten years she has been subject to attacks of neuralgia, affecting the left forearm. Three years ago she was seized with neuralgia, affecting the second and third fingers of the left hand. There was tenderness in the metacarpal region, whence pains were reflected up the forearm and arm, producing complete disability of the member. The parts were very painful to the touch, and slightly swollen. This condition persisted for four months, and then gradually disappeared. From this time until June, 1892, she remained well, when a marked attack of metatarsal neuralgia, affecting the fourth toe, supervened. This apparently did not follow an injury. The pain became continuous, and resisted all efforts for its relief, except when she laid down, when it would diminish or entirely disappeared. When I saw her, at the end of October, she had become bed-ridden, almost helpless, and exceedingly nervous, but nothing of disease was evident in the foot except the violent, unbearable pain that was invariably produced at the fourth metatarso-phalangeal articulation, upon the slightest pressing together or rolling upon each other of the outer metatarsal bones. At this time, even the weight of a stocking could not be tolerated upon the foot. The pain extended into the peroneal and sciatic nerves. She had lost fifty pounds in four months. The calf on affected side measured one and a half inches less than its fellow.

The affected joint was excised, primary union secured, and she steadily regained her usual health. Pain has disappeared, and she can walk with comfort.

A maternal aunt of Mrs. E. injured her foot eight years ago, and suffered in much the same manner as did the niece. She has never been able to secure relief, and to-day is scarce able to walk across a room without bringing on a severe attack of the pain.

A sister of the patient injured her foot ten years ago, and was then confined to her room for twelve months, because pain developed whenever the member was placed upon the ground. For five years she was unable to walk upon the street, while at the present time she cannot walk far without originating an attack of metatarsalgia, and has to be extremely cautious in walking over uneven surfaces.

CASE IV.—Mrs. S. C., aged forty-five years, a missionary residing in Japan. She writes:

"When out walking in the city of Tokio, Japan, in the summer of 1888, and wearing a new pair of high-heeled shoes, I felt first a slight pain, which soon increased to severity, in my right foot in the region of the fourth metatarso-phalangeal articulation. The pain became so intense that I could walk no further. These paroxysms of pain continued to return with the slightest aggravating cause, the disease gradually becoming worse, so that for two years past, when at home, I have seldom had a shoe on my foot, and was not able to bear the loosest shoe while riding in a carriage, being almost always compelled to remove it after entering. When suffering the most intense pain it was accompanied with a general nervousness of my whole system. Upon removing my shoe all pain and nervousness soon ceased."

I removed the affected joint in May, 1892. In three weeks the patient was able to walk about with great freedom in ordinary shoes, and has since remained free of pain.

CASE V.—Mrs. R. T., aged thirty-two years; Canadian; house-keeper. Has suffered for five years from well-marked metatarso-phalangeal neuralgia, involving fourth toe of left foot. No assignable cause. Attacks have been growing more frequent and severe progressively until she became almost invalided. Was compelled to remove shoe regardless of surroundings instantly upon supervention of the attack.

In December, 1892, I amputated the fourth toe together with the corresponding metatarsal head. In three weeks she was walking about as well as ever and has been entirely relieved of all discomfort.

CASE VI.—Lizzie T., a Russian; single, aged twenty-two years; mill hand. This woman works the treadle of a machine with right foot. Two years ago began having pain radiating from fourth toe. The frequency and severity of these attacks—necessitating removal of shoe—have increased steadily until she was entirely unable to work and had difficulty in walking.

In January, 1893, she entered the Polyclinic Hospital, and my resident, Dr. M. W. White, excised the affected joint under my supervision. Primary union occurred, and the cure has been complete.

Morton<sup>1</sup> gives the following graphic description of a case of metatarsalgia, written by a medical friend who had been a sufferer from the more severe form of the disease:

"I have suffered intensely at intervals from this affection for

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

many years, and in all this time have never found medical man or layman who understood what I meant when I complained of it or alluded to it. It has been pronounced by surgeons who have examined my foot to be a subluxation or a malformation of the articular surface of the first phalanx of the fourth toe, where it articulates with the fourth metatarsal bone, the concavity not being sufficiently concave. This I have long been convinced is an error.

"My own sensations have convinced me that the pain is caused by pressure upon a nerve, but what pressed upon the nerve I was unable to tell. The immediate necessity of removing the boot and the relief afforded by manipulating the foot in a manner learned by experience pointed to a dislocation; but the reduction of the displacement was never sufficiently sudden and marked to confirm the belief that there had been a dislocation.

"Now, after living for more than half a century, practised my profession for over thirty years, and suffered half my life with an affection not understood and ranked with a disease so trifling as a corn, I find myself enlightened and the mystery cleared up by your valuable paper on the subject.

"The first paroxysm occurred in my boyhood, and was produced by tight lacing of skate-straps. On unbuckling the straps, the 'cramp,' as I called it, was at first soon relieved and thought nothing of; but a continuance of this system of squeezing by tight straps and tight boots, and riding for hours on horseback with the flexors of the leg and foot in violent action and the toes turned in, the attacks became more frequent, more painful, and the abnormal condition of the parts became chronic. These were in my case undoubtedly the causes predisposing. The causes determining the accession of a paroxysm are the wearing of a badly-fitting boot, especially if the sole be narrow; a long and fatiguing walk, particularly on a hot day over a hot pavement; a long ride on horseback; a wet boot sticking to the sock; a wet sock sticking to the toes; long-continued flexion of the knee-joint, as in a railroad-car, carriage, or lecture-room; treading on an uneven surface, as a cobblestone pavement; and, should the nervous system be depressed from any cause, these exciting causes will act more powerfully.

"The symptoms of an attack in my case are most intense pain, 'cutting to the heart,' sickening, a feeling that it is unendurable, faintness, cold sweat, total incapacity for the time of directing the mind or will to any other subject, a horrible increase of torture on the use of the boot-jack; and all this with no redness, no swelling, no abrasion of the skin, no callosity,

no visible displacement of bones, at least after removal of the boot.

"The suddenness of the attack is noteworthy. I have been obliged to drop everything and remove my boot, sometimes in company, sometimes in my carriage. I have even been obliged to sit down on the curbstone and remove the boot. I have dismounted from my horse and sent home for slippers before I could proceed. I have tied my horse to a tree and lain on the ground, unable to ride farther.

"I have spoken of a tight boot and of removing the boot, but I have had tight boots which were great favorites, because they would not 'let my toe out of joint.'

"The remedies from which I have obtained relief are removal of the boot and then manipulating the toes—straightening them out. When inconvenient to take off the boot, I have found that grasping the foot tightly round the metatarsal region will answer; and I have sometimes worn a circlet of India-rubber band, binding the foot round the instep. Putting on a dry boot and dry stocking is of great benefit, and the boot should be well sprinkled with powdered soapstone before putting it on. Frequently an attack has been relieved completely without other means than rest and a cup of strong tea."

Morton also reports the following from another medical friend:

"For several years previous to 1864 I had been subject to occasional dislocations of a relaxed joint in the fourth toe of my right foot. They had always occurred in walking, and the symptoms were perfectly distinct; the reduction, which was usually effected without difficulty, by simply 'working' the toe, was equally unmistakable.

"In the summer of that year I was climbing a mountain, when the joint became displaced; and, as it would speedily have slipped out again if reduced, I allowed it to remain luxated until I had finished the ascent and returned to the base, when the pain was so great as to make it necessary for me to ride home. After several hours of suffering, the joint gradually resumed its normal state.

"Since that time I do not remember that the luxation has ever taken place; but I have had many attacks of neuralgic pain in the part, coming on generally after exercise, but sometimes after sitting in one position, as in my carriage. Often exercise does not induce it. Heat, as from the pavements or the sand in summer, is a much more frequent cause. It begins gradually, and sometimes wears away in the same manner, but sometimes vanishes suddenly, as if by magic, without the use of any means

of relief. The pressure of a boot always aggravates it; but it has attacked me while in bed at night. Diversion of the mind will often allay it, but it sometimes comes on again afterward with far greater severity.

"In 1869, while spending most of the summer at Atlantic City, I suffered more from this trouble than ever before or since. It would then often come on at night, after a day in town; and once or twice the attacks lasted more than twenty-four hours. So great was the annoyance from it, that I proposed amputation of the toe to a surgical friend, but he advised me against it. Since then it has been much less troublesome, though I have sometimes had it more or less every day for a week.

"Deep pressure over the metatarso-phalangeal joint is painful, but does not bring on an attack unless long continued. Cold has given me more effectual relief than any other remedy I have tried."

The three following cases are quoted from the same source:

"In March, 1873, I was asked to see Miss H. S., aged twenty-six years, who, while in Europe four years before, had injured her right foot by stepping upon a small stone. She said that she had at once experienced intense pain, which was soon followed by slight swelling and redness. From the date of the injury localized pain in the foot continued, especially while wearing a shoe. The pain was referred to the head of the fourth metatarsal bone. There was constant distress in the part, often of a sickening character. After wearing a shoe, pain came on with great intensity. At such times the shoe had to be instantly removed, the least delay causing a paroxysm of great suffering. The boot or shoe had to be removed so often that a slipper was substituted. A marked lameness was induced by the patient's endeavor to spare the foot in walking. The pain was confined to the joint of the fourth metatarsal bone with the base of the associated phalanx. Pressure in this region, or rolling the fourth and fifth toes upon each other, caused violent pain, which extended up the limb. It was severe when pressure was made upon the base of the first phalanx of the fourth toe, which could be prominently felt between the third and fifth toes."

"Dr. M. W. Alison, of Hagerstown, Maryland, called on me in the spring of 1875, seeking relief from neuralgia in his right foot, which had existed for years, and was gradually getting worse, and stated that he was willing and ready to submit even to amputation of the leg. He gave the following history:

"About six years ago I experienced an unpleasant, painful sensation in my right foot, which possibly originated in a strain: the pain was first observed in the fourth metatarso-phalangeal

region; in the course of a fortnight it was followed by most violent pain, which was simply unbearable and so severe that it terminated in a convulsion. A painful condition of the parts followed, and with the least provocation (wearing a shoe or boot), sometimes without known cause, paroxysms of intense pain returned at various intervals, lasting from one to forty-eight hours. The pain, with one or two exceptions, has been confined entirely to the section of the foot indicated. My suffering has been beyond all comprehension; very often I have been compelled to jump from my buggy or stop while walking, remove my boot, which has always been of ample size, apply ligatures to the limb or foot, use hypodermic injections of morphine, frictions, or call upon some one to assist me by standing on the foot. This affliction has been the burden of my life, and this burden has been increased after consulting many eminent medical men, who gave me no satisfaction as to the nature of the disease, nor even suggested a hope of relief. My health otherwise has been uniformly good. I am satisfied the cases you have had are similar to my own, save in the intensity of my sufferings, and I shall gladly submit to the operation you have suggested."

Mrs. C. H. K., of this city, a lady fifty years of age, gave me the following history: "'The queer feeling,' I have been accustomed to call it, which has been in my left foot for thirty years, is a painful condition. The pain is in and about the joint of the fourth toe, with occasional attacks of intense suffering, when the pain extends to the knee, and, if my shoe is not instantly removed when the attack comes, the pain reaches the hip. It does not matter whether I wear a large or a small shoe, as I have never worn a tight one, but it seems that the least pressure will produce the same result. Often my sufferings have been exceedingly acute, and come on without any warning. Once I was taken while walking in the street, and the agony was so great that I was compelled to rest on a stoop, remove my shoe, and walk some distance in my stocking alone, the pain running in a straight line to the hip joint. In September, 1868, while at the Academy of Music, I had an unusually severe attack, and, not removing my shoe as quickly as I should have done, was obliged to walk to my carriage without the shoe, and suffered intensely for three hours. My eldest sister has been similarly affected still longer than myself, but in her right foot, same toe and joint. She has several times given up wearing shoes, but the attacks continued."

Charles K. Mills,<sup>1</sup> in a lecture upon "Pain in the Feet," relates

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Nervous and Mental Diseases, vol. xv. p. 4.*

the history of a typical case that was entirely relieved by the operation of Morton. A woman, in jumping upon rocks twisted her foot. The foot apparently was not injured, and she was soon about as usual. During the next two years, at intervals of from two to eight weeks, a peculiar pain in the foot would develop that would last two or three days. Two years later she injured the foot again in the same manner. After this the pain was seldom absent more than a few days, and each recurring attack was of increased violence. Again, two years later, the pain became almost constant. The pain was a dull, heavy, sickening ache, from the foot to the hip, and with a sharp pain through the foot. At times the ache would be limited to the foot, but the sharp pain was there constantly. Arising in the morning, the patient could not put her weight upon the foot until she had taken hold of it suddenly from the top and pressed it hard together, and held it in both hands with all her strength for some minutes. After exhausting every known local and general remedy, the fourth metatarso-phalangeal articulation was excised. The patient subsequently slowly became free of every vestige of the former pain, and was entirely restored to health.

Poullosson<sup>1</sup> describes an instance where a medical man, twenty-nine years of age, had suffered from this affection for some years. It gave no trouble when the foot was at rest and without a shoe, but was usually brought on by wearing boots and walking a good deal. It was much more likely to occur when going down than in going up hill. The pain came on suddenly, a feeling of something having given way in the feet accompanying the onset, together with a kind of grating sensation. After this the patient walked lame, for all pressure of the anterior portion of the sole of the foot to the ground was painful. If walking was persisted in the pain increased, till in a few moments it attained its maximum, rendering all further attempts at locomotion impossible.

Edmund Roughton<sup>2</sup> has reported the following case :

"A medical man, aged thirty-three years, complained that for eighteen months he had suffered from attacks of burning pain in the forepart of the sole of the left foot. The pain occurred several times a week, and was usually brought on by prolonged standing or by walking any considerable distance, and was so severe as sometimes to cause him to remove his boot and grasp the sole of his foot with his hand. On examining the foot, I found that the transverse arch formed by the heads of the metatarsal bones had sunk, so that a distinct convexity replaced the concavity normally found in this situation.

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> London Lancet, March 16, 1889, p. 553.

"In this case the patient had increased considerably in weight during the period of development of the symptoms, and his transverse metatarsal ligament had presumably been unequal to the increased strain."

E. H. Bradford<sup>1</sup> has reported a series of thirteen cases, none of which, however, were severe enough to demand operation. In these the symptoms were not in a single instance the result of traumatism, nor was any evidence of dislocation or other local change observable. These patients were all in enjoyment of excellent health, and in none were there evidences of gout or rheumatism.

**TREATMENT.**—The less severe forms of metatarsalgia may often be prevented from running into the more serious types by proper shoe construction or by wearing a narrow flannel bandage about the ball of the foot. Morton, whose suggestion the latter is, directs that the bandage be two inches wide, and long enough to wrap neatly and firmly about the metatarsus some five or six times. The end is pinned, and the stocking drawn over. This has given marked relief in a number of cases.

The shoes for persons suffering from this disease should be firm-soled, make no lateral pressure upon the metatarsus, yet have the instep tight enough to prevent the foot slipping forward. The great object of the shoemaker should be to prevent pressure, either lateral or antero-posterior, upon the metatarsal arch, and also to prevent any rolling motion of the outer metatarsal heads upon their fellows. A broad, rigid sole would appear to best fulfil this last indication. Bradford proposes the use of digitated stockings in these cases, with a view of keeping the toes further apart. As the foot spreads when the weight of the body is thrown upon the member, it is apparent that the individual should be standing when the measurements for shoes are made, as has been advised by Grün.

The use of various pads in the shoe and about the toes, also such measures as the hollowing out of cavities in the sole opposite one or more of the metatarsal heads have been tried, but invariably found unsatisfactory. A variety of the affection calling for so much attention to secure comfort would clearly demand the certain cure to be afforded by operation.

In persons where rheumatic or gouty diathesis may be suspected appropriate remedies for those disorders should be given a thorough trial before operative measures are resorted to. But when the condition is entirely of local mechanical origin the employment of general or local medicinal agents is useless. On

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

the other hand prolonged rest in bed will benefit all cases more or less, and occasionally secure relief for long periods, or even permanently cure the milder phases of the disorder.

Operative treatment should be limited to excision of the metatarso-phalangeal articulation from which the neuralgia radiates, or, perhaps, to amputation of the corresponding toe above the joint, as have been recommended by Morton and endorsed by other writers. These procedures are among the safest and simplest in surgery. Of amputation of the toe, together with its metatarsal head, nothing more need be said than that by this measure the possibility of subsequent trouble arising from a tendency of the toe to retract and ride above or below its fellows is excluded. However, this heretofore occasionally troublesome sequel can be avoided by dividing the extensor and flexor tendons while excising the joint, as I have done in five cases with most satisfactory results.

*Operation.*—Primary union should be aimed at. To secure this the foot must be scrupulously cleansed. The nails should be trimmed short. Then soap, water, and nail-brush should be liberally applied. Following this the member should be soaked in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. carbolic acid solution, and finally dressed in a moist carbolic dressing of the same strength until the surgeon is about to operate. Where the foot is especially foul it is my custom to finally dip it into a saturated solution of permanganate of potash until colored to a dark mahogany hue, and then transfer it to a saturated solution of oxalic acid until decolorized, before applying the temporary dressing. When the surgeon is about to operate the temporary dressing is removed and the parts given a final douche with 1:1000 sublimate solution.

A vertical incision from one and a half to two inches long is made, beginning over the proximal inter-phalangeal joint and extending upward in the centre line of the toe.<sup>1</sup> The extensor tendon now comes into view, and is divided. Another stroke of the knife carries the incision through its entire length down to the bone. The handle of the knife or other moderately blunt implement is then employed to separate the tissues from the upper and lateral portions of the joint. Next the blades of a powerful sharp-pointed, narrow-bladed cutting pliers are pushed down on either side of the phalanx immediately below its base (hollow of the blades always toward the articulation), and this bone divided. The metatarsal bone is then similarly divided just above its head. The separated joint is now seized by bone

<sup>1</sup> This joint has also been excised through an incision in the sole, but the method is objectionable on many grounds.

forceps and dissected away from any remaining attachments. This done, the flexor tendons will be seen lying in the bottom of the wound, and should be picked up by forceps and divided with scissors. If hemorrhage is severe and not controllable by moderate compression of the parts, ligatures should be applied. I have never had occasion to apply a ligature in this operation, as the pressure of the dressing has always sufficed to control any oozing that might continue after the sutures had been applied. The wounded edges are next to be approximated—no drainage being required if asepsis has been maintained—by continuous or interrupted suture, as may be preferred. A gauze and cotton dressing is finally applied and bound firmly on with a wet gauze roller, care being observed to place little pads of the gauze in such positions as will hold the toe in its proper position during healing.

The foot should be kept considerably elevated for the first two days, after which it may be brought to the level of the bed. I prefer my cases to remain in bed or on a couch until the fourth or fifth day, when they may be permitted to sit up with the foot resting on a chair. At the end of a week the sutures are removed; two or three days after which the patient is permitted to move cautiously around, while at the termination of three weeks all restraint may be removed and a firmly healed wound and permanent cure confidently expected. No special form of shoe or particular care of the foot is afterward required.

In case suppuration should arise in the wound, the sutures should be at once removed, the wound cavity washed out with full strength peroxide of hydrogen solution, then with  $\frac{1}{1000}$  corrosive sublimate solution, and gently stuffed with iodoform gauze. All of which should be repeated every one or two days until the wound closes by granulation.

In addition to the references given in the text the following may be mentioned to complete the bibliography of the subject:

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